

a second unit at the second location coupled to the other end of each of the links for receiving and multiplexing the inverse multiplexed cell stream from each of the active links to produce the cell stream; and

at least one link trained and set to idle status, wherein the first unit and the second unit switch to use the idle link to replace any one of the active links that has failed and wherein the status of the idle link is changed to active, thereby avoiding system down time due to line failure.

6. (Original) The system of claim 5, wherein the failed active link is retrained at the optimal rate and the status is set to idle.

7. (Currently Amended) A method for passing a cell stream from a first location to a second location to avoid delays due to data link failure, the method comprising:

selecting at least two data links from a plurality of data links;

training the at least two data links at an optimal rate;

setting the status of the at least two data links to active;

selecting at least one data link from the plurality of data links;

training the at least one data link at the optimal rate;

setting the status of the at least one data link to idle;

at the first location, inverse multiplexing the cell stream over the data links that are trained at a optimal rate and set to active status;

at the second location, receiving and multiplexing the inverse multiplexed cell stream
from each of the active trained data links to produce the cell stream; and

switching to use the trained idle data link when one of the active trained data links fails.